

Troublemakers:  
Feminist Anti Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio

Undergraduate Research Thesis

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by  
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## Introduction:

In May of 2014, *The Columbus Dispatch* reported on the rape of a female student at Ohio State who was assaulted while walking home at night “when a stranger pulled a gun on her and threatened to kill her if she didn't follow his orders. He pressed her against a car and sexually assaulted her until a passing car scared him away. Two weeks later, that same man raped another woman in the same neighborhood.”<sup>1</sup> *The Columbus Dispatch* reported on the rapes to criticize the university’s handling of off campus crime. Ohio State sends out email and text notifications when a crime has occurred that is deemed a threat to the community. However, Ohio State can use their own discretion to determine which crimes pose a threat to the community and self select which sexual assaults prompt a warning. *The Columbus Dispatch* reported on the rape in 2014 to criticize the university’s inaction to this off campus crime, OSU did not alert members of the community of the rape and two weeks later the same assailant raped another woman in the same neighborhood.

During the 2015-2016 academic year, Ohio State sent three safety alerts for reported sexual assaults. And yet, for the same year, OSU’s Department of Public Safety daily crime log shows 18 reported cases of rape. The log lists the date of the report and short description of the case, for example, on November 4<sup>th</sup>, “OSU student reported rape by a known acquaintance. Investigation Pending.” Ohio State selectively decides which sexual assaults are sent out as alerts to the community and which remain unknown to the public. *The Columbus Dispatch* reported that up until 2007, Ohio State issued “alerts only when people reported being raped by strangers.”<sup>2</sup> The university’s policy prior to 2007 denied the legitimacy of acquaintance rape by

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<sup>1</sup> Binkley, Collins. "The Annual Federal Report on College Crimes Due This Week Is Deceptively Inaccurate." *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus), September 30, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Pyle, Encarnacion. "Colleges Issuing More Alerts - Increase a Result of Better Reporting, Not More Crime, Officials Say." *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus), November 11, 2007.

only considering sexual assaults committed by strangers as threatening to the community. Ohio State creates limited definitions of rape on campus by deeming specific cases as dangerous, such as assaults committed by strangers, and ignoring incidents of date rape. This practice has been widely criticized by *The Columbus Dispatch* who reported that the university ignored crime in off campus neighborhoods surrounding OSU so they are able to report lower overall crime rates. One student remarked to *The Columbus Dispatch*, “If you live across the street, across that campus line, it's like nothing ever happened.”<sup>3</sup>

Ohio State’s current practice of selectively reporting certain acts of rape is part of a longer history in which OSU has created narrow conceptions of rape on campus since the 1950s and 1960s. In this period, the university created a definition of rape that maintained racist ideologies about men who commit rape. In the post war era, OSU largely reported assaults committed off campus by African American men that the university labeled outsiders to the campus community. The university also assured female students that if they followed university rules, such as mandatory curfew hours, they would avoid rape. The university’s warning to female students to follow the rules created ideologies that blamed women for rape by labeling survivors as rule breakers for defying policies that limited women’s mobility to campus space. The women’s movements in the 1960s and 1970s demanded that the university help female college students liberate themselves from the boundaries of campus in order to have agency over their mobility. Women Against Rape (WAR), an anti-rape organization, created a feminist space that allowed women to testify about rape and sexual violence. These women broadened the definition of sexual assault to include acquaintance rape and shattered the illusion that rape didn’t occur on campus. In 1983 after over a decade of activism, WAR forced the university to

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<sup>3</sup> Binkley, Collins. "The Annual Federal Report on College Crimes Due This Week Is Deceptively Inaccurate." *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus), September 30, 2014.

create the Rape Education and Prevention Program, which acknowledged that male students committed rape on campus.

WAR's struggle to redefine the nature of sexual assault fits in a longer history of anti rape activism. Historian Estelle Freedman's *Redefining Rape* analyzes how activists have redefined society's understanding of sexual violence by exposing rape as an act of power used to keep women from accessing public space. Freedman describes how suffragists organized in 1910 to expose "mashers," men who sexually harass women on the street, by linking male sexual aggression in public to women's limited mobility. "The revolt against the masher signaled an important transition in American women's public lives as they navigated urban space as workers and consumers... Women recognized that street harassment impeded their mobility and marked them as intruders on historically male space."<sup>4</sup> Similar to suffragists, who linked women's oppression to their denial from public space, WAR understood that rape is a political act used to limit women's mobility. Women Against Rape argued that Ohio State used narrow conceptions of sexual assault to mark off campus space as dangerous to women, which ultimately limited their mobility and blamed rape survivors for accessing male dominated space.

WAR linked the threat of rape in public spaces to limited mobility because the university's *in loco parentis* policies, such as mandatory curfews, denied women access to public streets for their own protection. *In loco parentis*, meaning "in place of the parent," was a practice on college campuses in which university administrators acted as guardians for young students who were living independently for the first time. These policies allowed campus space to mimic "the home" with university administrators as parental figures. This allowed the university to create the illusion of campus as a safe space for women while marking nearby neighborhoods as

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<sup>4</sup> Freedman, Estelle. *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. 2013. 191.

hostile space. WAR challenged the university's narrative with women's testimonies of acquaintance and marital rape that exposed campus and "the home" as dangerous spaces for women. WAR argued that all women were vulnerable to rape, regardless of which spaces they occupied. Therefore, the burden of preventing sexual assault rested on the entire community, not individual women. WAR fought rape spatially by using community action strategies to reclaim space for women in off campus neighborhoods as physical symbols that sexual violence would not be tolerated.

The first chapter of this thesis analyzes Ohio State's campus before Women Against Rape formed. In the Cold War era, Ohio State created programming that sexualized female students by encouraging them to marry before they graduated. When the university constructed gender roles for women that valued female students as future brides they limited women's ability to say no to sexual coercion of their male peers. This sexualization made women vulnerable to rape on campus as male students were told women went to college to become objects of their sexual desire. By the 1960s, female students began to demand the university accept them as scholars by claiming space for themselves on campus. Many women also questioned the narrow conceptions of rape created by the university and in the mid 1960s students at Ohio State reported rapes that occurred in their homes and not in alleyways of off campus neighborhoods. The role of space within university conceptions of rape exemplifies the spheres in which Ohio State claimed sexual violence occurred. These policies ignored rape committed by male students and marked campus as privileged space for the mostly white, middle class, male students. The university also created ideologies that blamed women for rape by labeling survivors as rule breakers for defying university *in loco parentis* policies that limited women to "the home" of campus space.

The second chapter of this thesis narrates the history of WAR's founding and subsequent activism throughout the 1970s. WAR reclaimed space for women and created feminist community at Ohio State. In 1976, WAR opened the Toni Goman Feminist Rape Crisis Center and organized shelter houses in off campus neighborhoods to create networks of communication for women. The rape crisis center was a liberated space for women because, unlike campus space, it did not dictate rigid heteropatriarchal gender roles for women. This liberated space allowed women to share their personal experiences with sexual violence. They knew that when women spoke with other women in their communities about rape, those conversations created activists. It was through these conversations with survivors that WAR expanded their definition of rape.

The final chapter of this thesis focuses on WAR's activism in the 1980s and 1990s. As WAR moved into the 1980s, a new generation of feminists inherited the organization during an era of growing backlash to the women movement. This counteroffensive, including funding cuts that forced WAR to give up their campus location of rape crisis center and move further away from the community, occurred concurrently with some of WAR's most significant activism. The same year funding cuts limited their resources, WAR organized a massive protest on Ohio State's campus that gained national media attention and forced the university to form the Rape Education and Prevention Program. Shortly over a decade later, WAR disbanded in 1995. Members debated if radical feminist politics were still relevant to their generation of activists and internal debates over homophobia and efforts to make WAR more "mainstream" led a large segment of members to disband. During these decades of contradictions, some of WAR's greatest successes unfolded at the same time that the organization faced internal divisions and funding difficulties.

While WAR does not exist on Ohio State's campus today, their radical feminist politics continue on in student led anti-rape activism. Ohio State's definition of rape has expanded dramatically since the 1950s. OSU officially defines sexual violence as "a sexual act that is completed or attempted against a victim's will or when a victim is unable to consent due to age, illness, disability, or the influence of alcohol or other drugs."<sup>5</sup> And yet, even with broader definitions of rape, campus continues to be a hostile space for women. In 2015, Ohio State conducted a Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault, which showed that more than 1 in 4 female students are sexually assaulted before their senior year. The same survey found that 60% of female students at OSU reported being the victims of sexual harassment.<sup>6</sup> Rape and other forms of violence define many women's experiences on campus and it continues to limit the mobility of all female students. OSU's aforementioned policy on sexual assault further mentions that "sexual violence includes creating an environment that feels unsafe based on sexual messages or images."<sup>7</sup> By their own definition, Ohio State commits sexual violence against all women who occupy campus space.

Ohio State cannot effectively prevent sexual assault until it stops maintaining a culture that excuses rape on campus. The university currently creates limited definitions of rape by deeming specific cases as dangerous, such as assaults committed by strangers, and ignoring incidents of date rape. *The Columbus Dispatch* has repeatedly criticized the university's underreporting of rape in order to make campus appear like a "safe space" for female students. Ohio State's attempts to control conversations on sexual violence have historically led to racist

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<sup>5</sup> "Sexual Violence : Definitions." Office of Student Life, Student Conduct. Accessed April 25, 2016. <http://studentconduct.osu.edu/page.asp?id=39>.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies. "An Open Letter to the OSU Community from the Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies." *The Lantern*, September 28, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> "Sexual Violence : Definitions." Office of Student Life, Student Conduct. Accessed April 25, 2016. <http://studentconduct.osu.edu/page.asp?id=39>.

and patriarchal conceptions of the crime. The history of student led anti-rape activism illuminates the reality of rape on campus through the testimonies of activists and survivors.



## Chapter 1:

In 1962, the rape and murder of Mary Margaret Andrews, a business major at Ohio State, terrified the campus community. Andrews' body was found in an alley a few hundred meters from campus.<sup>8</sup> The same year, the Dean of Women at Ohio State sent pamphlets to all female students cautioning them to be aware of their soundings because, "the bitter truth is that, in our society there are sick people walking the streets who may do harm to others."<sup>9</sup> Andrews' death and the university's response created conceptions of rape as a crime that occurs in off campus neighborhoods committed by "sick" outsiders to campus. These ideologies ignored the reality of rape committed on campus by male students. Students responded to Andrews' death by demanding increased lighting in off campus neighborhoods because they believed they could prevent rape by making off campus streets safe.<sup>10</sup>

University policies in the Cold War era further enforced a conception of rape that narrowed it to public streets and male dominated spaces. *In loco parentis*, meaning "in place of the parent," was a practice on college campuses in which university administrators acted as guardians for young students who were living independently for the first time. These policies allowed campus space to mimic "the home" with university administrators as parental figures. This allowed the university to create the illusion of campus as a safe space for women when in reality administrators created programming that sexualized female students as "future brides" that made them vulnerable to rape.

In her history of anti-rape activism, *Redefining Rape*, Estelle Freedman claims that when women are sexualized they become more vulnerable to the threat of rape. Freedman notes the

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<sup>8</sup> "Warning." *The Lantern*, (Columbus), September 25, 1962; "Presenting Coed Safety" *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus), January 26, 1966.

<sup>9</sup> "Warning." *The Lantern*, September 25, 1962.

<sup>10</sup> Boller, Donna. "Are Campus Area Lights Ample?" *The Lantern* (Columbus), November 14, 1963.

importance of female chastity in early anti-rape activism. Women used the preservation of chastity as a tool to gain agency in court against their rapists, as chastity was precious to a woman's future marital options. University policies that sexualized female students and told men that women existed on campus in order to marry them occurred at the same time as post war America ushered in a time of sexual liberalism. Freedman describes how the sexual revolution of the 1960s impacted ideologies of rape. "In the past, preserving chastity and preventing out of wedlock births had given them leverage in negotiating whether to consent to sex. In the new sexual order, the standard for consent had to be renegotiated... who would believe that a woman had withheld consent, given new expectations of participation in the sexual revolution?"<sup>11</sup> Freedman asserts that the sexual revolution in post war America left women vulnerable to rape and coincided with a profound shift in legal discourse on sexual violence that created greater legal protection for men accused of rape.<sup>12</sup>

At Ohio State, university programming sexualized female students by encouraging them to become engaged before they graduated. When the university constructed gender roles for women that valued female students as future brides they limited women's ability to say no to sexual coercion of their male peers. This sexualization made women vulnerable to rape on campus as male students were told women went to college to become objects of their sexual desire. At the same time, Ohio State more than doubled their enrollment of women in the post war era, sending conflicting messages to women by creating space for them as academics while encouraging them to return to the home as brides after graduation. By the 1960s, female students began to demand the university accept them as scholars by claiming space for themselves on campus. Women also questioned the narrow conceptions of rape created by the university and in

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<sup>11</sup> Estelle Freedman. *Redefining Rape*. 277.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 272.

the mid 1960s women at Ohio State reported rapes that occurred in their homes and not in alleyways of off campus neighborhoods. The role of space within university conceptions of rape exemplifies the spheres in which Ohio State claimed sexual violence occurred. These policies ignored rape committed by male students and marked campus as privileged space for the mostly white, middle class, male students. *In loco parentis* created ideologies on rape by creating the university as “the home,” a safe space where sexual violence didn’t occur. Meanwhile, the university created ideologies about men who commit rape by reporting rapes committed in off campus neighborhoods that were often perpetrated by African American men that the university labeled outsiders to the campus community. The university also created ideologies that blamed women for rape by labeling survivors as rule breakers for defying university *in loco parentis* policies that limited women to “the home” of campus space.

Ohio State created programming in the post war Era that constructed narrow gender roles for women by enforcing femininity through mandatory dress codes to limiting which spaces were appropriate spheres for women. Ohio State enforced curfews that only applied to female students and limited women’s mobility at night.<sup>13</sup> This policy was in place in order to enforce the university’s concept of ideal behavior for women, which labeled female students who accessed public space at night as rule breakers. The university created programming that outlined ideal behavior for women through curfews that marked off campus space as dangerous.

At the same time, the university encouraged women to spend their time on campus securing relationships with men. Up until the mid 1960s, Ohio State showed the film “Coed Courtesy” to incoming female freshman at their orientation. The film served to introduce women to their place on campus by advising them how to properly introduce themselves to men, how to get dates and what to wear once on them and finally, “the problem of saying goodnight.” The

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<sup>13</sup> Shirley Dunlap, “The Voices of Women Oral History Project,” Ohio State University Archives

film rhetorically asks its audience, “are girls faster at college?” According to the film, appropriate coed courtesy meant giving in to some of the sexual desires of their male dates, such as “necking,” but stopping short of actual sexual intercourse in order to preserve their reputations.<sup>14</sup> Celia Crossley attended OSU during the time this film was shown and remarked that, “I guess it all does come down to expectations. What’s the world expect of you? What did Ohio State expect of you? Get married.”<sup>15</sup> This film and its role in introducing women to campus as freshman explicitly shows the university’s beliefs on why women went to college and it’s attempt to actively guide them not professionally or academically but rather, romantically. Lastly, Ohio State organized Bridal Fairs for female students. The Bridal Fairs organized vendors who brought booths full of wedding dresses, jewelry options, table settings and even held a fashion show.<sup>16</sup> Through this programming, OSU encouraged a heteronormative, nuclear, and patriarchal lifestyle for female students.

When the university constructed gender roles for women that valued female students as future brides they limited women’s ability to say no to sexual coercion of their male peers. Historian Estelle Freedman states that the sexual revolution created a new sexual order that encouraged intimacy between men and women that ultimately limited women’s ability to deny male sexual aggressions.<sup>17</sup> Freedman notes an article written in the *Stanford Law Review* that argues that “male sexual aggression was normal and that women were expected to say ‘no, no, no (although meaning yes, yes, yes)’ before they acquiesced to intercourse.”<sup>18</sup> The programming that sexualized female students also denied their ability to fight male sexual advances and

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<sup>14</sup> Renee Nicole Lansey, ‘*Women Don’t Need Rules Now: Undergraduate Women in Central Ohio 1963-1974.*’ 10.

<sup>15</sup> Celia Crossley, “The Voices of Women Oral History Project,” Ohio State University Archives

<sup>16</sup> Renee Nicole Lansey, ‘*Women Don’t Need Rules Now.*’ 12.

<sup>17</sup> Estelle Freedman. *Redefining Rape*. 273-274.

<sup>18</sup> Estelle Freedman. *Redefining Rape*. 274.

therefore made them vulnerable to rape. As long as women were not seen on campus as legitimate students but rather future brides, men would question their right space on campus.

While Ohio State continued to encourage female students to become engaged, at the same time, the university more than doubled their enrollment of women in the post war era, sending conflicting messages to women by creating space for them as academics while encouraging them to return to the home as brides after graduation. Many women in the generation of students who watched “Coed Courtesy” at their freshman orientation had once sat at the dinner table and heard their mother’s stories of working in factories for the war effort or serving in the Women’s Army Corps (WAC). Like their mothers before them, these women carved out space for themselves in public. Just as working class families were able to send their children to college with G.I. Bill, women began enrolling in universities in new numbers. In 1914, Ohio State University enrolled 881 women.<sup>19</sup> By 1948, that number had expanded to 4,737 female students.<sup>20</sup> In the post war decades, their population continued to escalate and by 1965 there were nearly 13,000 women on OSU’s campus.<sup>21</sup> Baker Hall, one of the women’s dorms on campus, was reportedly the largest women’s dorm on a college campus in the nation.<sup>22</sup> Shirley Dunlap Bowser lived in Baker Hall at OSU in 1953 in a double room that the university managed to put three women in due to limited housing.

By the 1960s, female students began to demand the university accept them as scholars by claiming space for themselves on campus. Celia Crossley attended OSU during the time “Coed Courtesy” was shown and remarked that, “I guess it all does come down to expectations. What’s

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<sup>19</sup> “Dean’s Report Shows Shift In Coed Housing Since 1914,” *The Lantern* (Columbus) November 29, 1940

<sup>20</sup> “Enrollment Hits 22,240,” *The Lantern* (Columbus) April 6, 1948

<sup>21</sup> Renee Nicole Lansey, ‘*Women Don’t Need Rules Now.*’ 43.

<sup>22</sup> Shirley Dunlap, “The Voices of Women Oral History Project,” Ohio State University Archives

the world expect of you? What did Ohio State expect of you? Get married.”<sup>23</sup> Denise Deschenes began graduate school at Ohio State in 1967. She defied the norms of women in academics as she planned to go to medical school and worked in the male-dominated science department. Deschenes described her time at Ohio State as hostile. She was constantly asked by her male peers, “Why are you doing this?” and repeatedly told she would, “grow old in the lab.”<sup>24</sup> Deschenes described how an advisor in the physics department told one of her few female peers that unless she got married she could not continue in the graduate program. Ohio State would only allow women into positions of power within academics if they conformed to appropriate gender roles by becoming wives. Deschenes also described the violence women faced if they inhabited this hostile space. “If a woman complained that an attending physician sexually harassed her or something, I remember this one student, it was terrible what happened to her. She complained and she was written up for not going through proper channels, and it was put in her file, and nothing was ever done. So there’s nobody you could go to for help. You just had to suck it up.”<sup>25</sup> Deschenes’ recollection of the sphere of the university as “hostile” and sexually aggressive exemplifies the results of university programming that labels women as the objects of men. Women who attended Ohio State and defied the university’s expected gender roles by placing their education before marriage, found their path filled with obstacles maintained by the university that often left them vulnerable to sexual aggression of male peers and professors.

Some women challenged the university’s narrow construction of ideal womanhood and created space for women. Some female students found an environment at OSU filled with other women who felt the same way about their education as they did. The sex segregated dorms offered women space on campus that was exclusively their own. Denise Deschenes describes life

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<sup>23</sup> Celia Crossley “The Voices of Women Oral History Project,” Ohio State University Archives

<sup>24</sup> Denise Deschenes “The Voices of Women Oral History Project,” Ohio State University Archives

<sup>25</sup> Denise Deschenes “The Voices of Women Oral History Project,” Ohio State University Archives

in the dorm for graduate women and the experience of meeting women for the first time that took their education as seriously as she did. “It was exciting to be actually in graduate school, especially in that residence hall, because it was all graduate women. And so it was like, ‘These people are really serious about their educations!’ Even when I was in college, not everyone was serious about it. I was always the outlier because I took my studies seriously... So with my group, we were all supportive of each other. But it was difficult being a female graduate student then. There weren’t many.”<sup>26</sup> Women at Ohio State formed their own academic communities as they faced hostility from their professors and university administrators who often believed they served no academic purpose on campus. Women who created female community within the hostile sphere of campus were pushing back against patriarchal systems that punished women for defying gender norms.

Like female students who pushed back against narrow conceptions of gender within academic spaces, by the mid 1960s women began reporting sexual assaults that challenged the university’s definition of rape. Women questioned the university’s narrow conceptions of rape by reporting rapes that occurred in their homes and not in alleyways of off campus neighborhoods. Reports of rape in the domestic sphere or during the day troubled the notion that rape only occurred at night on public streets by strangers. Just as the murder of Mary Margaret Andrews in 1962 created fear on campus of women alone at night, another violent crime against a female student brought conversations of rape from protecting women in public to realizing that domestic space was not safe either. In 1964 a female student was raped in her home on Chittenden Avenue. The assault created panic across the campus as one student told *The Lantern*

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<sup>26</sup> Denise Deschenes, “The Voices of Women Oral History Project,” Ohio State University Archives

“If it can happen to that girl, it can happen to me.”<sup>27</sup> This student’s acceptance that all women are vulnerable to rape challenged the university’s assurances to students that only women who broke curfew or other university rules were vulnerable. This student’s report and the campus community’s reaction to it created a broader understanding of rape as a crime committed in domestic spheres.

After this attack, safety, and specifically rape, was given new attention in the campus community. The year following the sexual assault in the apartment on Chittenden, *The Lantern* featured a four part series titled, “Presenting: Coed Safety.” The word Coed was strictly applied to female students and most of the series focused on the rape and murder of Mary Margaret Andrews and the “series of violent crimes of a similar nature have been plaguing campus since.”<sup>28</sup> *The Lantern* stated, “The problem is best seen in the fears—as well as the indignations—of the coeds themselves.”<sup>29</sup> The significance of this statement is that women on campus were not only fearful, but angry. Even if there was not yet organized anti-rape activism, women revolted against the patriarchal system that excused violence against them by reporting their assaults. Several years later the reports of sexual assaults in homes had grown more common and within a one week period in 1969, four women reported being raped in their apartments during the middle of the day.<sup>30</sup> The university could no longer claim that rape was a crime that only affected women who walked alone at night in public.

Conversations on rape had been in flux for several years before this increase in reporting of sexual assaults that occurred in homes and during the day. In 1965, the Director of Campus Security claimed that statistics on rape would always be flawed because women challenged the

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<sup>27</sup> Cotton, Tom. “Officials Concerned Over Coed Molestings,” *The Lantern* (Columbus), October 26, 1964

<sup>28</sup> “Presenting Coed Safety” *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus), January 26, 1966.

<sup>29</sup> “Presenting Coed Safety” *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus), January 26, 1966.

<sup>30</sup> Vance, Linda. “Fourth Assault in Six Days” *The Lantern* (Columbus), April 1, 1969



legal definition of assault. “Some girls may consider words as a molesting... They feel there is a double-meaning; consequently, the girls are insulted. Others may take the words as a compliment.”<sup>31</sup> He is talking about sexual harassment, but it is clear that women were reporting instances of violence that were not taken seriously. Shifting understandings of sexual assault created a division between what women called “harassment” and this university administrator labeled a “compliment.” This same administrator later blamed women for the state of violence on campus because they hesitated to come forward and report rape. “Coeds are hurting themselves by not reporting to the police... Too many times girls go back to rooming houses or dorms and discuss the matter with friends. Perhaps an hour later they call us, but by that time, their description has gotten hazy and the molester or exhibitionist has probably left the area.”<sup>32</sup> The Directors comment illuminates the conversations female students were having about sexual violence. Rather than reporting first to the police or campus security, which openly blamed women for the violence enacted on them, women spoke to other women and it was these conversations that empowered them to report. Women only space allowed female students to share their stories of sexual violence and create broader understandings of rape based on the experiences of women.

Even as women began having conversations about rape that broadened its definition among themselves, men in the criminal justice system continued to define rape as a crime brought about by women and committed by “outsiders”. In 1969, the Columbus police assured the university community that outsiders were perpetrating the majority of campus crime.<sup>33</sup> The role of space within university conceptions of rape exemplifies which spaces Ohio State marked as dangerous and which ones they deemed safe spaces. These policies ignored rape committed

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<sup>31</sup> “University Police Force Is Termed 'Adequate,’” *The Lantern* (Columbus). February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1965.

<sup>32</sup> “University Police Force Is Termed 'Adequate,’” *The Lantern* (Columbus). February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1965.

<sup>33</sup> “OSU Attracts Crime,” *The Lantern* April 29, 1969.

by male students and marked campus as privileged space for the mostly white, middle class, male students. Historian Nicholas Syrett analyzes masculinity on college campuses in his history of white, male fraternities, *The Company He Keeps*. Syrett notes the post war college campus witnessed a surge in student riots where men stormed women's dorms to carry out panty raids. Syrett stressed that panty raids allowed male students to assert their power over women by violating women only space. He notes that some scholars have referred to panty raids as "symbolic rapes," Syrett claims the panty raids served as a symbol of male domination over their female classmates.<sup>34</sup> Ohio State experienced panty raids in the post war era and university response to these "symbolic rapes" excused the behavior of male students. In 1951, a panty raid brought unwelcome publicity to male aggression on campus and President Bevis assured alumni that the behavior of male students was simply men blowing off steam. "We have had some trouble the last two or three years with "May Day" parties in which men tried to get into the girls' dormitories. No serious harm, I am sure, was intended but the practice gave rise to bad publicity ... If students are a little more restless this spring than usual, I think the imminence of war is largely responsible."<sup>35</sup> The university president's casual dismissal of a student riot that resulted in several arrests exemplifies the university's ability to protect men who have a privileged status as students. *In loco parentis* created ideologies on rape by creating the university as "the home," a safe space where sexual violence didn't occur while marking public space as dangerous and outsiders to campus as violent.

The university created ideologies of rape as an act committed by men who were outsiders to the campus community. However, these men are not only outsiders to campus, they came specifically from the urban city surrounding the university. Reports on rape from the university

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<sup>34</sup> Nicholas Syrett, *The Company He Keeps*. 244

<sup>35</sup> President Bevis to General Mershon, 1951, Box 29, Folder: Student Matters 1940-1955, Howard Landis Bevis Collection, The Ohio State University Archives

run newspaper *The Lantern* shows numerous assaults reported in this manner. In 1956, *The Lantern* reported the arrest of a Columbus man after a wave of sexual assaults in neighborhoods near campus and quickly assured the community that he was not in fact a student, but an outsider.<sup>36</sup> This conception of rape became fixed in the minds of students who argued that rape was not a problem on campus, space controlled by the university, but rather the public space of the city. One student reported to *The Lantern* the problem of rape would be solved if the university would fix "the general problem of cleaning up the surrounding neighborhoods."<sup>37</sup> Campus and the students that occupied its space were understood in comparison to the outsiders of the surrounding neighborhoods. It was this space that was understood as inherently hostile to women.

The state continued the notion that rape was a crime that could be fought by fixing public space, not personal relationships between men and women. Police statements prove that the state made assumptions as to which men were likely to rape and these assumptions led to arrests. The police spoke to *The Lantern* in 1955 to urge women to report rape. They encouraged them by stating "even meager and inconclusive identifications of the molester will enable us to pin the crime on some known suspect, which we can apprehend immediately."<sup>38</sup> These men were most likely taken from the same surrounding neighborhoods that were consistently labeled as dangerous and violent. And finally the conception of rape as a crime that occurs, not on campus, but in cities by outsiders is described by one female student in 1969 who wrote to *The Lantern* on the "bane of urban life: rape."<sup>39</sup> The word "urban" is a dog whistle term used to code racial messages about African Americans. Legal scholar Ian Haney-Lopez states that white politicians

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<sup>36</sup> "Police Charge Local Citizen as Molester." *The Lantern* (Columbus) April 5, 1956

<sup>37</sup> "Coed Safety Problems: What is to be Done?" *The Lantern* (Columbus) January 27, 1965.

<sup>38</sup> "Chief Sholer Urges Campus Crime Facts" *The Lantern* (Columbus) December 7, 1955.

<sup>39</sup> "Misguided Solutions" *The Lantern* (Columbus) January 31, 1969.

use “dog whistle politics” to “communicate messages about threatening nonwhites” in order to implement tough on crime policies.<sup>40</sup> Conversations about rape as an “urban” crime committed by outsiders to the mostly white, middle class college campus were in reality conversations about African American men. Estelle Freedman argues that the justice system’s prosecution of black men for sexual violence defined the way American society understands the crime of rape.<sup>41</sup> Freedman notes the long history of black men’s legal vulnerabilities to rape charges and the vigilante justice of lynching that often followed a rape accusation. Accusing black men of interracial rape became “the recognized method of re-enslaving blacks,” according to African American scholar, W.E.B. Du Bois.<sup>42</sup> Rape accusations were used by a white dominated society to keep African American men in fear. The same conversations about rape and the men who society assumed committed acts of sexual violence continued to happen with coded language that referred to rapists as “urban” rather than black.

The university also created ideologies that blamed women for rape by labeling survivors as rule breakers for defying university *in loco parentis* policies that limited women to “the home” of campus space. The Dean of Women told female students that by following university rules with “caution” they could prevent crimes against them.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, women who disregarded university rules put themselves in danger of sexual violence from strangers. The lasting impact of curfews and dorm regulations would create a system that criticized women for appearing in public after dark and blamed them for their rapes. During the Winter Quarter of 1956, Paul Elleman, the Director of Physical Plant, who managed campus safety commented on the series of rapes on campus in an article in *The Lantern* titled “Prowler Prompts Warning.”

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<sup>40</sup> Haney Lopez, Ian. *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*, Oxford University Press. 2014. ix

<sup>41</sup> Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape*. 89

<sup>42</sup> Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape*. 89.

<sup>43</sup> “A Warning” *The Lantern* (Columbus) September 25, 1962

Elleman claimed the attacks stemmed from “single women students who take the chance of going across campus alone at night.” Elleman’s comments become even more unfounded when the article progresses and the “proowler” mentioned in the title is described as a man who disguised himself as a serviceman carrying a flashlight and tools. The attacker then deceived women into allowing him into their dorm rooms under the pretense that he was a university employee. The university not only responded to these attacks on women in their own homes as being the fault of women who walked alone at night, Elleman further urged students “to become aware of the necessity of taking some individual responsibility upon themselves for their safety. Students sometimes are in a hurry, or do not stop to think, and thus get careless.”<sup>44</sup> The fact that the director of student safety answered the reports of women who were raped in their dorm rooms with assurances that rape only happened to women who carelessly walked alone at night, exemplifies how ingrained these ideologies of rape were.

Estelle Freedman notes the victim-blaming language present within legal scholarship in the post war era. Some legal scholars claimed women who reported rape had invited the attack themselves and were therefore responsible for their assaults. A major criminologists claimed in 1967 that rape was often “victim-precipitated” when “the behavior of the victim is interpreted by the offender either as a direct invitation for sexual relations or as a sign that she will be available for sexual contact if he will persist in demanding it.”<sup>45</sup> Victim-blaming has a long history in the discourse on rape. When the university warned women not to walk alone at night, they not only limited which space women had access to, they created an ideology that blamed women who were raped while alone in public after dark. It was women who transgressed the accepted gender roles outlined for them by the university that were sexually assaulted.

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<sup>44</sup> “Prowler Prompts Warning” *The Lantern* (Columbus) March 28, 1956.

<sup>45</sup> Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape*. 274.

Freedman also describes the prevalence of language meant to protect accused rapists by limiting the definition of rape in the 1962 Model Penal Code published by the American Law Institute. The Code did not allow married women to charge their husbands with rape, it required witnesses to be present at the rape to corroborate the victim's version of events, it called for a three month statute of limitations on rape charges and a woman's sexual history was admissible and sometimes pertinent to determining the severity of charges for the accused rapist.<sup>46</sup> Severity of the charges was also determined by certain factors of the rape itself. If the rape was committed by a stranger and resulted in "serious bodily injury" then it received a higher charge than one committed by an acquaintance. If a rape survivor was a "voluntary social companion" of the man who raped her, then her assault was seen as a lesser crime by the courts.<sup>47</sup> Freedman states, "This construction in turn could make it difficult for women to complain of the other forms of sexual assault that seemed, in contrast, not to merit the same attention, including the coercive and forceful behaviors of acquaintances."<sup>48</sup> The Model Penal Code and legal scholars shaped the criminal justice system's response to rape. Just like the university, the state created a limited definition of rape as an act perpetrated by strangers and not husbands or male partners.

Rape is a tool of power to control women and limit their mobility. Just as the university policed the behavior of women on campus by enforcing femininity and heteronormative gender roles, they limited the mobility of women through curfews. Ohio State used curfews to mark which spaces were deemed safe for women, like on campus dorms, and which spaces posed a threat to women after dark. The university used narrow definitions of rape that positioned sexual violence in off campus neighborhoods and consequently marked campus as a safe space. This conception of rape blamed women for sexual violence by labeling female students as rule

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<sup>46</sup> Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape*. 274.

<sup>47</sup> Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape*. 275.

<sup>48</sup> Estelle Freedman, *Redefining Rape*. 275.

breakers for defying curfew and occupying public space at night. These conceptions of rape further limited women's mobility and access to space. At the same time, Ohio State ignored male students who defied university rules, like those who perpetrated the panty raid in 1951 and had their behavior excused by the president of the university.

Female students at Ohio State fought patriarchal and racist ideologies of rape by reporting sexual assaults that challenged the university's narrow definition including assaults that occurred in homes during the day. By the mid 1960s, some women on campus were having conversations about their experiences with sexual violence and encouraged women to come forward. At the same time, female students used the women only space of sex-segregated dorms to connect with each other and create community for women on campus. It is through female only spaces that women challenged the university's narrow definitions of rape.

## Chapter 2:

In 1977, a lesbian student was raped by three men on the oval, the central space of campus known as the heart of the university. Days before the assault, the same three male students targeted the survivor in her dorm room and warned her that, “We do not want a dyke in our commons. You better move out. If your don’t, we will show you what men are like.”<sup>49</sup> Less than a week later, the woman was beaten and raped on the oval by the same three men. She reported that the men had said, “This is the way it should be” while they raped her.<sup>50</sup> Women Against Rape, a feminist run anti-rape organization, responded to the violent assault by organizing a march on the oval to reclaim that space for women. This march was the largest student demonstration since the anti-war protest in 1970 that resulted in the university closing for two weeks.<sup>51</sup> WAR activist Elaine McCrate recalled the major media attention the demonstration brought and the subsequent claims by Columbus press that WAR had lied about the assault for a publicity stunt.<sup>52</sup> WAR formed at a time when no space on campus was safe for women and as survivors came forward to share their horrific testimonies, society assumed they were lying.

The symbolism of the oval as the sight of the violent assault is significant in that, the oval has seen decades of student activism, it is the speakers block of reform at the university. By committing the mass rape here, the three male students claimed campus as a vicious, heteromasculine space. This survivor had been targeted as a lesbian woman, the men’s statements to her that they would “show her what men are like” exhibits a violent masculinity

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<sup>49</sup> Demonstration of Outrage Flier, 1977, Folder: Women Against Rape 1977-1985, Student Life, The Ohio State University Archives

<sup>50</sup> Demonstration of Outrage Flier, 1977, Folder: Women Against Rape 1977-1985, Student Life, The Ohio State University Archives

<sup>51</sup> Elaine McCrate “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>52</sup> Elaine McCrate “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University



that was used to punish women who stepped outside the bounds of accepted gender roles. There claim that “this is the way it should be” shows a forced culture of heterosexuality on campus and male assumptions that female students existed to serve as their sexual objects whether by consent or not. Ohio State maintained a patriarchal system on campus that told women they existed on campus to become engaged and sent messaging to male students that women were on campus to be objects of their desire. This entitled male students to assume they had the right to women’s bodies on campus and that women who stepped outside of accepted heteronormative gender roles were accessible or in WAR’s words “fair game.”<sup>53</sup>

Historian Ruth Rosen states that university programming that enrolled women into academic spaces and then relegated their future to the domestic sphere sent female students contradictory messages about the purpose of their education.<sup>54</sup> Rosen states, “Experts warned that every year a girl spent developing her mind ‘reduced the probability of a woman marrying.’”<sup>55</sup> And yet, by the end of the 1950s, most liberal, white, middle class families expected their daughters to gain a college education.<sup>56</sup> Second Wave feminist movements came out of contradictory messages that gave women opportunity for greater mobility and then shamed them for disregarding accepted gender roles. The sexual revolution of the late 1960s created a new social order on college campuses that transformed the accepted gender norms for women. Rosen states, “Suddenly, peer pressure to say yes replaced the old obligation to say no, threatening to eliminate a young woman’s sexual veto. No longer could young women trade sex for love and a future commitment... With one foot firmly rooted in the fifties – and the other sliding into the sixties - many of them were uncertain whether to embrace new freedoms or to

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<sup>53</sup> Women Against Rape, *Freeing Our Lives*. Box: 5, Folder: Rape Prevention Brochures and Pamphlets, Association of Women Students Subject File, The Ohio State University Archives

<sup>54</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 40

<sup>55</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 40

<sup>56</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 40

protect themselves from the possibility of sexual exploitation.”<sup>57</sup> These female students, who opposed a revolution against the patriarchal system that oppressed women, feared the new sexual order held its own hostilities for women. At the same time, other women on campus organized against university conceptions of their future that limited them to the domestic sphere.

Some of the earliest protests organized by feminists at Ohio State rejected the university sponsored programming that encouraged women to become engaged. Feminists and Gay Liberation activists organized these protests and joined in coalition to challenge heteronormative patriarchal programming at Ohio State. The university policed homosexual behavior by denying gay activists access to public space and limiting gay students “non-normative” behavior to private spheres. The university limited the mobility of gay men and all women by denying them access to space and keeping marginalized groups isolated. Feminists at Ohio State reclaimed space for women and created female community. This liberated space allowed women to share their experiences and established strategies to implement change. Women Against Rape formed in order to redefine rape based on the experiences of women. They reclaimed space for women and organized neighborhoods to create networks of communication that placed the burden of rape prevention on communities and not individual women.

As college women’s enrollment reached a new height at the end of the 1960s, female students challenged university programming that encouraged a patriarchal, heteronormative lifestyle. Some of the earliest protests organized by feminists at Ohio State centered on the image of college women as “future brides.” One of the most notorious campaigns organized by Women’s Liberation was a direct action protest of Ohio State’s Bridal Fair in 1972. The Bridal Fair was organized by the Women’s Self Government Association, which was closely linked to the Office of the Dean of Women. The Bridal Fair brought in vendors who offered future brides

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<sup>57</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 143

all the resources necessary for planning a wedding; they also organized a fashion show of female students in wedding dresses. In 1972, activists from Women's Liberation and the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) joined the fashion show. Rhonda Phillips, a feminist activist dressed as the groom and smoked a cigar, while Jeffery Arnold a leading member of GAA dressed as the bride with paper money pasted on her veil and "buy me" written on her cheek. A third activist dressed as a housewife and all wore handcuffs. Members of both groups threw rice and carried a three tiered wedding cake painted with Monopoly money. The student newspaper *The Lantern* quoted one demonstrator explanation of the protest because "marriage is sold as a commodity."<sup>58</sup> Feminists and Gay Liberation activists organized these protests and joined in coalition to challenge heteronormative patriarchal programming at Ohio State.

Bridal Fairs were not the only programming that encouraged heterosexual relationships. The university policed homosexual behavior by denying gay activists access to public space and limiting gay students "non-normative" behavior to private spheres. The last Bridal Fair was held on campus in 1972, but the university continued to alienate homosexual students through alternative methods. In the same year the Department of Campus Safety and Vice President Moulton met with the Gay Activist Alliance to discuss the organizations role on campus. The Director of Campus Safety's report on the meeting outlines their objectives, the first of which was to keep the meeting secret, "a crucial factor is that the meeting and the issues are not to be the subject of notoriety."<sup>59</sup> GAA was banned from telling anyone the meeting had happened, for fear that the university would be seen collaborating with homosexuals. The Director continued, "The only public policy that the President's office and D.P.S. can conscientiously support is that of enforcement of the law as enacted by the state legislature... sexual conduct in public areas

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<sup>58</sup> Johnson, Leona. "Bridal Fair Protesters include Bearded 'Bride'" *The Lantern* (Columbus) February 4<sup>th</sup> 1972

<sup>59</sup> Director of Department of Safety, Donald Hanna to the Vice President Edward Moulton; Box: 97, File: Student Organizations (1972), Novice G. Fawcett Collection, Ohio State University Archives

likely to be viewed by and affront others will result in enforcement of the law.”<sup>60</sup> The report continues on to say that homosexuals who keep their behavior to private spaces, will go unpunished. They also lay out the following rules, the GAA can have no written communication present on campus, they must meet with DPS before organizing any GAA events, and finally “that the GAA assume a ‘low key’ approach to their activity such as to not draw public attention.”<sup>61</sup> Ohio State actively worked to deny the presence of gay and lesbian students on campus in order to maintain the appearance of a straight culture within the university community. The university limited the mobility of gay men and all women by denying them access to space and keeping marginalized groups isolated.

Female students at Ohio State joined student led social movements throughout the 1960s along with their male peers. Feminist activists sought allies in their progressive male peers and more often than not found oppressors instead. One activist recalled, “I was always shocked when I would meet men who were sort of hippies or left leaning and you know, they would talk so eloquently about civil rights or you know they would talk about the Vietnam War and then they would turn around and treat women with such utter sexism.” She felt these men found the sole worth of women to be how pretty they were or if they were good in bed. “It was a constant source of astonishment, the lack of awareness of men.”<sup>62</sup> OSU Women’s Liberation movement came out of the need for women to have their own political movement. They recognized that women only space was necessary in order to end women’s isolation from each other and create feminist communities.

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<sup>60</sup> Director of Department of Safety, Donald Hanna to the Vice President Edward Moulton; Box: 97, File: Student Organizations (1972), Novice G. Fawcett Collection, Ohio State University Archives

<sup>61</sup> Director of Department of Safety, Donald Hanna to the Vice President Edward Moulton; Box: 97, File: Student Organizations (1972), Novice G. Fawcett Collection, Ohio State University Archives

<sup>62</sup> This oral history participant did not wish to be identified, this oral history will be titled “Interview 1” throughout the rest of the citations. “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

In 1971, the Women's Action Collective formed. WAC served as an umbrella organization to several smaller groups of feminist activists that focused on rape prevention, childcare, auto mechanics, feminist literature and many other issues.<sup>63</sup> By 1976, WAC received a \$425,000 grant from the National Institutes for Mental Health in order to research rape prevention strategies. Women Against Rape, a member group of WAC, wrote the grant proposal and organized the project.<sup>64</sup> One of WAR's first acts after receiving the grant was to create women only space near campus. WAR opened the Toni Goman Feminist Rape Crisis Center on the second floor of the Women's Action Collective house.

Activist Bat Ami Bar On recalled conversations about the importance of space within the WAC house itself. "Which floors were men going to be allowed in?" She continued, "There was a general consensus that there needed to be space that was only for women, but you don't run a bookstore like that."<sup>65</sup> The house served as a meeting place where women could come and hang out, WAC'S feminist run bookstore was located on the first floor and the business was open to anyone in the community, including men. The second floor, which housed the Toni Goman Rape Crisis Center, was open only to women.<sup>66</sup> The WAC house and rape crisis center gave WAR legitimacy. Bat Ami Bar On recalled, the center "wasn't just about space. It was a declaration of, 'we're here' in terms of power." She continued, "By getting a place to work, it was incredible, really incredible... it really created enormous possibilities."<sup>67</sup> Nancy Whittier described the WAC house in her history of radical feminist activism in Columbus as the "geographic center for

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<sup>63</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 34.

<sup>64</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 37.

<sup>65</sup> Bat Ami Bar On "Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio," oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>66</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 37.

<sup>67</sup> Bat Ami Bar On "Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio," oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

the feminist community.”<sup>68</sup> The WAC house and the rape crisis center functioned as a feminist marker within a larger progressive community.

WAR specifically chose a house located in the North campus neighborhoods because it was a progressive community full of left activists. There were several houses across North campus in the same neighborhood that served as community centers. Bat Ami Bar On recalled, “You could almost see a geography of activism by mapping these houses.” WAR chose this community because they wanted to be surrounded by other activists. “Even though we are all students, we see ourselves as a community group and we are part of a larger community of activists, left activists to be precise, there is a tenants union, there is a lawyers guild, there is a food co-op that gets organized, a variety of things and we are part of that,” recalled Bat Ami Bar On. A progressive community full of young activists trying to create change could be more receptive of anti-rape activism that called for an end to rape through the restructuring of society.

The WAC house and the rape crisis center were liberated spaces for women because, unlike campus space, they did not dictate rigid heteropatriarchal gender roles for women. Instead, according to Whittier, “the WAC house provided an environment where lesbianism was often taken for granted.”<sup>69</sup> Most of the activists in WAR were lesbian women.<sup>70</sup> Sunny Graff recalled with humor, “Many of the women were lesbians and those that weren’t eventually became one (laughs).”<sup>71</sup> WAR never considered itself a lesbian separatist organization. However, they did argue that society tells women their economic, physical and emotional well being rely

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<sup>68</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 37.

<sup>69</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 41.

<sup>70</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 41.

<sup>71</sup> Sunny Graff “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

on the men in their lives and this dependence on men leads to a “male-identified” life.<sup>72</sup> One early member of WAR recalled, “I think when I started with WAR, I was one of the very few heterosexual women that identified with heterosexual women—that was considered to be, in those days, that was considered to be a bad political choice. You know, now I like to say I didn’t choose this life style. That makes people laugh, but at the time, it was almost as if you were aligning yourself with what we would call the enemy.”<sup>73</sup> While heterosexual women may have felt pressure to examine their relationships with “the enemy,” other activists argued that members of WAR did not believe heterosexual women were lesser feminists. “If somebody had a man lover or a woman lover... nobody thought about the women who had man lovers as a traitor to something... Maybe somebody did, but not in my circle. I know that other people did and we had connections with radical and socialist collectives across the country so we knew those conversations existed,” recalled Bat Ami Bar On.<sup>74</sup>

Debates about the role of lesbianism within WAR’s philosophy were present, but they never created a serious division between the members of WAR.<sup>75</sup> Activists recalled that lesbian relationships were encouraged between members. A heterosexual African American activist in WAR recalled, “You know, it got at a point [where] you got kind of embraced and welcomed and acknowledged. You know if a straight woman became attracted [to a lesbian woman], people sort of were encouraging a spark or something. [Or if] two straight women maybe ran off, I don’t know, on vacation or something together and everybody [wa]s like, ‘Did anything happen, did anything happen?’ (laughs). And they, they sort of dabbled a little bit. That was just

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<sup>72</sup> Women Against Rape, *Freeing Our Lives*. Box: 5, Folder: Rape Prevention Brochures and Pamphlets, Association of Women Students Subject File, The Ohio State University Archives

<sup>73</sup> The Deradicalization of Columbus, Ohio’s Anti-rape Movement, 1972-2002. pg 105

<sup>74</sup> Bat Ami Bar On “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>75</sup> Bat Ami Bar On “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

celebrated.”<sup>76</sup> WAR created a space where women could experiment with their sexuality on a campus that enforced heteronormative roles for women.

This liberated space created a sense of community for women and allowed female students to share their experiences with other women. Ruth Rosen notes, women’s shared experiences with sexual violence and “exposing the hidden injuries of sex refocused attention on those female experiences that made women unique.” Female students active in women’s liberation movements began to discuss violence and rape in the female only spaces of consciousness raising groups. Sunny Graff and Caroline Sparks met within one of these groups and through their conversations on sexual violence founded Women Against Rape (WAR) in 1972.<sup>77</sup> Toni Goman, who was a single mother, was also in this consciousness-raising group, her name would later be given to the rape crisis center that WAR opened after she was brutally murdered.<sup>78</sup> WAR was a radical feminist organization that like WAC, also had a non-hierarchical structure, held its own consciousness raising groups and worked to end the isolation of women. Sunny Graff recalled that it was women’s stories and experiences with violence in her consciousness-raising group in WAC that mobilized her activism and lead to WAR’s founding. Graff herself had lost a friend who was murdered while hitchhiking and recalled her inability to talk about this act of violence before she joined women’s liberation. “At the time, there weren’t any women’s movement, there weren’t any rape crisis centers, there weren’t any violence against women movements and I was pretty much left with my own anger.”<sup>79</sup> Graff said her family and friends discussed the murder as if her friend had committed suicide by making the choice to go

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<sup>76</sup> Allen, Ardith. *The Deradicalization of Columbus, Ohio’s Anti-rape Movement , 1972-2002*. 120.

<sup>77</sup> Sunny Graff “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University; Law Association of Women OSU Handbook 1977: Women’s Legal Rights Workshop

<sup>78</sup> Sunny Graff “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>79</sup> Sunny Graff “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University



hitchhiking. Like the many women before her who had been assaulted by men, the blame for the crime resided on her. “Nobody talked about the responsibility of the man that had killed her,”<sup>80</sup> Graff recalled. Graff said her community’s reaction to the death was to increasingly police young women, which only fueled her anger over her loss. “The man that killed her isn’t going to impinge on my mobility, he isn’t going to impinge on my freedom.”<sup>81</sup> Sunny Graff and Caroline Sparks founded WAR in part to end the blame society puts on women for the crimes committed against them and to reclaim women’s mobility.

Women Against Rape formed out of Columbus’ feminist community and they used the shared experiences of women to redefine rape. In many ways, WAR had conversations about rape that were radically different than the university community’s understanding of the crime. First, they wanted to shift the narrative of blame away from victims and back onto assailants. Second, they understood that the fear of rape limited women’s mobility and therefore their access to public space. However, according to Sunny Graff, WAR “started out having the same misconceptions about rape as everyone else.” She recalled that “When we first started doing rape speak outs, everyone that came spoke about stranger rape and it was only after we had been on the phone [24 hour hotline] for awhile that we started getting calls from women who had been raped by their husbands, boyfriends or acquaintances... The more and more calls we got the more clear it became to us that the definition we had had or what we thought rape was, was just the tip of the iceberg of violence against women.”<sup>82</sup> It was through conversations with survivors that WAR began to expand their definition of rape. Historian Ruth Rosen describes the process

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<sup>80</sup> Sunny Graff “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>81</sup> Sunny Graff “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>82</sup> Sunny Graff “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

by which feminists put rape on the public agenda, “By ‘naming’ such hidden crimes, feminists generated the kind of debate that could turn a ‘custom’ into a crime.”<sup>83</sup> The ‘custom’ Rosen is referring to is rape committed by a partner or acquaintance. This act had become normalized into a ‘custom’ rather than a ‘crime’ and feminists, according to Rosen, challenged this normalization of rape by redefining sexual violence to fit their own experiences.

They knew that when women spoke with other women in their communities about rape, those conversations created activists. Many of the feminist activists in WAR organized against sexual violence because they had friends or had themselves been victims of rape. One activist recalled that she joined WAR after her next-door neighbor was raped in her home. “The police came and they gave her a really hard time. And it was like you know, they treated her like she was a liar... it was really traumatic. “ The police did not follow up with her case and her neighbor took it upon herself to interview the people living around her to see if anyone in the community had also been attacked. “What she discovered was that they guy who raped her was living next door... the fact that this rapist was living next door to us and the police never even bothered to search for him. They didn’t ask any questions. They just took the report and filed it... They could have found him if they had just knocked on a few doors... That was a real consciousness raising for me.”<sup>84</sup> The reality of rape within her community mobilized her.

Women Against Rape outlined their radical feminist philosophy on sexual violence in their publication, *Freeing Our Lives*, the first national publication to promote a feminist approach to rape prevention.<sup>85</sup> WAR called for women to “redefine rape in terms of our

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<sup>83</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 184

<sup>84</sup> Interview 1

<sup>85</sup> Allen, Ardith. *The Deradicalization of Columbus, Ohio’s Anti-rape Movement, 1972-2002*. 86.

experience.”<sup>86</sup> WAR redefined rape in three ways. First, they argued that rape was “an act of power and control.” Second, that all women are vulnerable to rape. “Regardless of age, race, social class, lifestyle or achievement, all women share a single status: that of being potential targets of violence... Inequities, which shield some groups of women and leave others more vulnerable impede our understanding of rape as violence against all women. No woman can be safe from rape until rape is no longer a threat for any woman.” Lastly, that rape is an act of violence and not of sexual desire.<sup>87</sup>

This redefinition of rape also challenged patriarchal conceptions of survivors of sexual violence. If rape is a political act to maintain the status quo of patriarchy, then women who confronted the system of power through non-normative behavior were targets of rape. In *Freeing Our Lives*, WAR states, “Those of us who challenge the expected behavior pattern for women under patriarchy may even be considered ‘fair game.’ For example, the community may tolerate the rape of a hitchhiker because she has not obeyed the conventions for her protection. The myth that women are responsible for rape camouflages the political function of control.”<sup>88</sup> Some women reconcile their fear of rape by blaming victims and adopting an “it can’t happen to me” mentality. “Women often prefer to believe victims were unworthy of protection or were careless and therefore ‘different.’ These beliefs maintain false distinctions between good and bad women.”<sup>89</sup> WAR’s analysis of the fear of rape as creating dichotomies of “good” and “bad” women mirror the conversation the university had on rape in the Cold War Era when they

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<sup>86</sup> Women Against Rape, *Freeing Our Lives*. Box: 5, Folder: Rape Prevention Brochures and Pamphlets, Association of Women Students Subject File, The Ohio State University Archives

<sup>87</sup> Women Against Rape, *Freeing Our Lives*. Box: 5, Folder: Rape Prevention Brochures and Pamphlets, Association of Women Students Subject File, The Ohio State University Archives

<sup>88</sup> Women Against Rape, *Freeing Our Lives*. Box: 5, Folder: Rape Prevention Brochures and Pamphlets, Association of Women Students Subject File, The Ohio State University Archives

<sup>89</sup> Women Against Rape, *Freeing Our Lives*. Box: 5, Folder: Rape Prevention Brochures and Pamphlets, Association of Women Students Subject File, The Ohio State University Archives

assured female students that rape only happened to women who broke the rules and existed outside of accepted spheres, essentially meaning “bad” women. Ohio State is the patriarchal institution that created conceptions of rape victims as “bad” women that, in WAR’s terms, made them “fair game” and excused the violence against them.

WAR challenged other these misconceptions of rape through workshops titled “Rape Myths and Facts” and created pamphlets listing various myths, “Most rapes are committed by black men against white women,” and the subsequent fact, “In 88 percent of rape cases, the rapist and his victim are of the same race. The incidence of black men raping white women is only 4 percent, while 8 percent of rape cases involve white men raping black women.”<sup>90</sup> Much of WAR’s literature on misconceptions of rape focused on race. The reversal of centuries of racism within anti-rape activism was a significant aspect of WAR’s redefinition of rape. WAR argued that the media selectively reported cases of rape in which black men raped white women despite statistical evidence to the contrary.<sup>91</sup>

And yet, African American women did not join WAR in significant numbers. One African American member of WAR who was interviewed said she felt like she was a token and had to serve as an educator to white women.<sup>92</sup> She said she disliked being the only woman of color because it made her feel like she had no community and that white members of WAR did not put a lot of “energy” into finding women of color.<sup>93</sup> She recalled, “everybody sort of was picking and choosing what their primary identity was. And that—I think that people always wanted me to do that. ... I think there was always discussion about, ‘What are you first?’” This

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<sup>90</sup> Stop Rape Pamphlet. Box: 5, Folder: Rape Prevention Brochures and Pamphlets, Association of Women Students Subject File, The Ohio State University Archives; Allen, Ardith. *The Deradicalization of Columbus, Ohio’s Anti-rape Movement, 1972-2002*.

<sup>91</sup> Women Against Rape, *Freeing Our Lives*. Box: 5, Folder: Rape Prevention Brochures and Pamphlets, Association of Women Students Subject File, The Ohio State University Archives

<sup>92</sup> Allen, Ardith. *The Deradicalization of Columbus, Ohio’s Anti-rape Movement, 1972-2002*. 112

<sup>93</sup> Allen, Ardith. *The Deradicalization of Columbus, Ohio’s Anti-rape Movement, 1972-2002*. 115

activists recollection that women in WAR did not put “energy” into creating a feminist community that considered the experiences of black women mirrors similar debates in anti-rape activism across the nation. Historian Ruth Rosen describes the complications of coalition building between white women and black women within anti-rape activism because of the long history of white supremacists using rape as a means to control black women. “For black women, rape was not only a sexual violation, it was also a symbol of white power and their double subordination as black women.”<sup>94</sup> Even as members of WAR were aware of the history of racism within conceptions and understandings of rape, white members failed to bridge the gap with African American activists.

WAR created female only space through the rape crisis center and reclaimed public streets by organizing neighborhoods and forming networks of communication for women living off campus. The grant WAR applied for from the National Mental Health Institute in 1976 was titled, “Community Action Strategies to Prevent Rape.” WAR’s specific community action strategies included opening neighborhood shelter houses for women, creating a whistle alert system, self defense training and organizing take back the night marches. These strategies all reclaimed space for women and worked to end their isolation from one another. Neighborhood shelter houses were run out of individual WAR member’s homes. Women underwent training in order to operate a shelter house, which served as a place women could go if they were in crisis. Sunny Graff recalled WAR organized shelter houses because “We want to have a visible sign in the community that here is a place you can go where people are going to support you... we are here to say we are against any form of violence and the community won’t tolerate it.”<sup>95</sup> Shelter houses also marked physical space across campus that symbolized women’s solidarity against

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<sup>94</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 185

<sup>95</sup> Sunny Graff “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

violence. The whistle alert system had a similar purpose because the whistles were a physical marker wherever women went that they would not tolerate rape. They showed WAR's power by serving as a visible warning to possible assailants. If women heard someone using their whistle, they were meant to come to her aid and confront the person harassing her.<sup>96</sup>

WAR also held confrontation workshops to train women to overcome the passivity instilled in them by society as well as self-defense training that granted women agency over their personal space. Activist Elaine McCrate recalled that after she joined WAR, she became empowered to fight off an assailant who attacked her during a party. "The bozo threw me down on the bed and pounced on top of me... and the first thing that went through my head was like hey, I am a member of Women Against Rape, do you really know what you're doing you little shit head. So I just began kicking and yelling... what it did was, I knew that I should fight."<sup>97</sup> McCrate's memory emphasizes the significance WAR had on women's lives at Ohio State. The first thing she thought of while being assaulted was her identity as a feminist anti-rape activist and the power she had to defend herself. By 1978, WAR had over 400 members, 70 of which were trained in organizing radical feminist activism.<sup>98</sup>

According to WAR's reports, under the Community Action Strategies to Stop Rape project, they trained women to organize "entire neighborhoods, apartment complexes and work places."<sup>99</sup> Community action strategies allowed women to quickly share information about women's safety, patterns of assault in their neighborhoods and build support networks. The

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<sup>96</sup> Sunny Graff "Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio," oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>97</sup> Elaine McCrate "Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio," oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>98</sup> Women's Rape Prevention Network Bulletin (1979), Folder: Women Against Rape 1977-1985, Student Life, The Ohio State University Archives

<sup>99</sup> Women's Rape Prevention Network Bulletin (1979), Folder: Women Against Rape 1977-1985, Student Life, The Ohio State University Archives

program was “designed to build women’s individual and collective strength by ending women’s isolation.”<sup>100</sup> These radical feminist strategies to bring women together in communities to fight rape are extremely similar to Southern black women’s anti-rape activism during the Civil Rights Movement. Historian Danielle McGuire describes the history of Southern African American women who organized against rape within their communities while they were denied justice under the law. McGuire notes, “When radical feminists finally made rape and sexual assault political issues, they walked in the footsteps of generations of black women.”<sup>101</sup> These women tried to prevent rape by sharing their stories and creating networks to alert one another of dangerous streets or specific white employers or police officers to avoid. McGuire rightfully calls the sharing of testimonies to create networks of communication a “form of direct action.”<sup>102</sup> Networks of communication between women were one organizing method used by WAR along with several other efforts to reclaim space.

Take Back the Night Marches are one of the ongoing strategies created by radical feminists to fight rape. These marches encouraged women to walk together at night, an action prohibited by years of university warnings. WAR’s marches to bring public attention to rape were some of their most successful events. In 1978, WAR organized a Take Back the Night March that coincided with marches by radical feminist groups in San Francisco, New York and the Furies in Washington, D.C.<sup>103</sup>

Much of WAR’s activism involved claiming space for women in public spheres. WAR brought conversations on rape into public because they believed rape prevention was the

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<sup>100</sup> Women’s Rape Prevention Network Bulletin (1979), Folder: Women Against Rape 1977-1985, Student Life, The Ohio State University Archives

<sup>101</sup> McGuire, Danielle L. *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance- a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010. 46

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 47

<sup>103</sup> Bat Ami Bar On “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

responsibility of the community, not individual women. While WAR did work with certain bodies of the state such as legislators, they did not believe the criminal justice system could end rape. WAR argued that the criminal justice system has punished rapists for and sexual assault still occurs.<sup>104</sup> Sunny Graff recalled WAR's philosophy on using the criminal justice system to prevent rape, "Punishing rapists isn't the way to deal with the problem... it's the patriarchal society that creates rapists and that's where we wanted to put our energy."<sup>105</sup> WAR argued the criminal justice system both maintained a patriarchal society and was historically racist. WAR believed the justice system failed women of color and left them vulnerable to sexual violence, which subsequently shaped white society's conception of rape. "Racism within the criminal justice system often denies minority women even the minimal protection afforded to white women... Inequities, which shield some groups of women and leave others more vulnerable impede our understanding of rape as violence against all women."<sup>106</sup> WAR believed the state maintained racist definitions of rape that violated African American women's ability to prosecute their rapists.

WAR also argued the racism within the justice system resulted in the unequal imprisonment of black men for rape.<sup>107</sup> Activist Bat Ami Bar On recalled that Women Against Rape "didn't believe in imprisonment."<sup>108</sup> Prisons did not prevent rape and the "injustice of the

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<sup>104</sup> Women Against Rape, *Freeing Our Lives*. Box: 5, Folder: Rape Prevention Brochures and Pamphlets, Association of Women Students Subject File, The Ohio State University Archives

<sup>105</sup> Sunny Graff "Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio," oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>106</sup> Women Against Rape, *Freeing Our Lives*. Box: 5, Folder: Rape Prevention Brochures and Pamphlets, Association of Women Students Subject File, The Ohio State University Archives

<sup>107</sup> Sunny Graff "Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio," oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>108</sup> Bat Ami Bar On "Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio," oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University



justice system” prompted WAR to discuss alternative systems to fight rape.<sup>109</sup> WAR discussed using “community justice” instead of relying on the state’s justice system. “We wanted the community to take responsibility for the safety of women,” recalled Sunny Graff, rather than individual women responsible for the acts of those around them.<sup>110</sup>

Female Students at Ohio State brought the women’s movement to campus in the late 1960s and reclaimed women only spaces. These liberated space fostered consciousness-raising groups in which women shared their testimonies of sexual violence. These conversations based on shared experiences of women created a redefinition of rape that acknowledged all women were vulnerable to rape. WAR created community action strategies such as shelter houses, self-defense classes and organized networks of communication within university neighborhoods. WAR placed the burden of rape on the entire community and not individual women. WAR argued that the community was responsible for rape because it fostered patriarchal relationships between men and women.

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<sup>109</sup> Bat Ami Bar On “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>110</sup> Sunny Graff “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

### Chapter 3:

The Toni Goman Rape Crisis Center served as a physical marker near campus that signified the importance of women only space to fight rape. The center was a symbol that WAR would not tolerate violence against women. In the mid 1990s, an intruder came into the rape crisis center and raped a WAR activist while she worked the 24-hour crisis hotline. This woman, an activist who worked to end rape, was violated in the very space meant to keep women safe. This intruder's violation was an attack on WAR's activism. He committed a horrific act of power by violating both the woman and the feminist space meant to keep women safe from patriarchal oppressions. Activists of WAR feared this survivor had been targeted as a violent message to their members. The activist who was assaulted chose not to report because "she had the kind of history that a rapist's defense attorney would love to rip apart."<sup>111</sup> Some members of WAR could not accept her choice. They believed the assault had been a message from a system of patriarchal oppression and it could not be answered with silence. Other members felt that this woman was a survivor and their obligation as anti-rape activists were first and foremost owed to her. The debate about this survivor's responsibility as a feminist activist to report and therefore end the silence on rape led to a substantial amount of members leaving WAR and their eventual disbandment.<sup>112</sup> The debate over the appropriate feminist response to rape plagued the organization throughout the 1980s and 1990s. After their first decade of activism, WAR began to question the role of radical feminism within their organization and debated how a new generation of activists would define their needs as feminists based on their own experiences.

These debates illustrated the ways in which notions about feminism changed in the 1980s. Political and cultural backlash to feminism rose up in response to the radical changes in

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<sup>111</sup> Allen, Ardith. *The Deradicalization of Columbus, Ohio's Anti-rape Movement, 1972-2002*. 132

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. 132.

society brought about by the Women's Movement.<sup>113</sup> One prominent actor in the backlash was mainstream media sources like The New York Times that dubbed the women who came of age in the early 1980s "the post-feminist generation."<sup>114</sup> According to many in the media, feminism's work was done and the movement had little left to accomplish. *Time* magazine asked in 1989, "Is there a future in feminism?"<sup>115</sup> Even as radical feminist organizations like WAR were still active across the nation, the media insisted that these women experienced the benefits of the women's movement, but didn't actually take part in it. WAR's existence in the 1980s and 1990s directly challenges the notion of a "post-feminist" generation. The same year the activist in WAR was assaulted while working the rape crisis hotline, they received on average 80 calls a month from women who were able to find resources to help their survivorship.<sup>116</sup> Just as the rape of a woman within the rape crisis center was an attack on feminism, Women Against Rape's activism was an attack on a patriarchal society.

The two decades following the rise of the Women's Movement produced an era of contradictions as feminist goals such as ending employment discrimination became widely accepted as more and more women chose to shun the title "feminist." Historian Ruth Rosen's *The World Split Open* examines the contradictions women of the 1980s and 1990s experienced after a decade of intense feminist activism was met with backlash. Rosen claims the backlash came from a society divided over the contributions of feminism.<sup>117</sup> It took the form of aforementioned mainstream media as well as the increasingly powerful conservative political movement of the New Right and Ronald Reagan's presidency.<sup>118</sup> All of these pushbacks made it

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<sup>113</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 331

<sup>114</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 274

<sup>115</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 338

<sup>116</sup> Hoover, Felix. "Rape Crisis Hot Line in Jeopardy – Women Against Rape Money Trouble" *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus) August 25, 1994

<sup>117</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 331

<sup>118</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 331

difficult to sustain feminist organizations in the 1980s. And yet, Rosen notes that more American women than ever before were embracing the progress made by feminist activists. By 1990, women made up more than half of undergraduate college students while 58 percent worked outside the home, compared to 35 percent in 1960.<sup>119</sup> This era of contradictions inspired a new generation of feminists to base the needs of their movement off of their own lived experiences. Rosen writes, “On most college campuses throughout the 1980s, small groups of young feminists organized “Take Back the Night Marches” and held symposia on date rape, pornography, and sexual harassment. These young activists helped sustain the movement by reinventing feminism for themselves.”<sup>120</sup> Third Wave feminist activists called for a redefinition of feminism on their own terms. Rebecca Walker, Alice Walker’s daughter, founded the Third Wave and released a statement that declared the strength of “third wave feminism is in its emphasis on making room for contradictions.”<sup>121</sup> This was the generation of feminists who inherited WAR’s legacy in the 1980s.

This era of contradictions within third wave feminism is evident from a spatial analysis of WAR’s activism in the 1980s and 1990s. In 1983, WAR lost their North campus location for the Toni Goman Rape Crisis Center due to funding cuts ushered in by conservative policies of the 1980s. The loss of this location demoralized members of WAR. And yet, the same year WAR became isolated from the campus community, they organized demonstrations that forced the university to create programming to fight rape, which acknowledged that sexual violence occurred on campus and was perpetrated by male students. Backlashes to feminist gains, like the funding cuts that forced WAR to give up the campus rape crisis center location, occurred concurrently with some of WAR’s most significant activism by forcing the university to create

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<sup>119</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 339

<sup>120</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 276

<sup>121</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 276

programming to fight rape, which marked out space for women on campus. A pattern of contradictions is woven throughout WAR's activism in the decades following their founding. In the 1980s, radical feminists in WAR debated emphasizing the centrality of lesbianism to their movement, and at the same time, some WAR members reported increased feelings of homophobia. All of the contradictions of this era stem from the same debate among members of WAR, how do we define feminism for ourselves? The new generation of WAR activists who inherited the movement questioned what role radical politics should have in anti-rape activism.

The achievements of the Women's Movement were not universally understood as progress.<sup>122</sup> The New Right galvanized women who organized in the name of family values by capitalizing on rising divorce rates and women in the labor force.<sup>123</sup> Within his first year of office in 1981, President Reagan cut 25 percent of social service grants, like the one WAR received from the National Mental Health Institute.<sup>124</sup> This backlash to feminist gains directly impacted WAR's ability to help survivors of sexual violence. In 1983, due to funding cuts, WAC was forced to give up their location on North campus, which housed the Toni Goman Rape Crisis Center. Karen Jensen, an activist in WAR, recalled that members in the 1980s were disillusioned by constant fundraising efforts. "We were scrambling all the time to make money for the house and everyone was getting like, we have to do *another* fundraiser? It was like this endless thing and we weren't getting anything, you know, all we're doing is having fundraisers."<sup>125</sup> Some women felt that the constant fundraising left no time for activism. WAR's

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<sup>122</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 331

<sup>123</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 331

<sup>124</sup> Hecth Schafran, Lynn. "Reagan VS Women," *The New York Times*. October 13, 1981  
<http://www.nytimes.com/1981/10/13/opinion/reagan-vs-women.html>

<sup>125</sup> Karen Jensen "Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio," oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

decision to forfeit the campus location was a necessary move that gave them more time to focus on rape prevention.

The WAC house served as the geographic center of Columbus' feminist community and members recalled that without it, WAR was isolated in an increasingly hostile political environment. WAR moved to an area further off campus that bordered on the Short North district, still within walking distance of campus, it remained close to the university community.<sup>126</sup> Not long after moving to this location, WAR moved the center deeper into the Short North and further from the community it had previously focused on with the Community Action Strategies to Stop Rape (CASSR) project. Karen Jensen recalled the constant movement created a sense of displacement, "There was a lot of fluctuation going on, a year or two and things would be different... there was no permanence in anything."<sup>127</sup> This was not singular to WAR's experience, all New Left activists groups that had made up the North campus progressive community were spreading further apart.<sup>128</sup> In this sense, the conservative politics of the 1980s fostered an attack on safe spaces for women by limiting resource for social services, like the rape crisis center.

Conservative politics were not the only force demoralizing feminists. Veteran activist Betty Friedan responded to the feminist backlash of the 1980s by further critiquing the women's movement in her work *The Second Stage*.<sup>129</sup> According to Rosen, Friedan argued that the feminist movement had gone too, she hoped to "isolate radicals and bring the women's

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<sup>126</sup> Karen Jensen "Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio," oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>127</sup> Karen Jensen "Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio," oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>128</sup> Karen Jensen "Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio," oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>129</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 335

movement into the mainstream of American life.”<sup>130</sup> Friedan insisted that sexual politics, including anti-rape activism, had taken over the movement by the 1980s and diverted its energy from mainstream causes that attracted a greater number of women into the movement. From her book, *The Second Stage*, “Obsession with rape, even offering Band-Aids to its victims, is a kind of wallowing in that victim-state, that impotent rage, that sterile polarization. Like the aping of machismo or obsessive careerism, it dissipates our own well-springs of generative power.”<sup>131</sup> Feminists who remained hopeful of radical change labeled Friedan’s work a “reactionary retreat” while others became disheartened by inner divisions within the movement.

Scholars have labeled the debate over the role of sexual politics within feminism the “sex wars.” As WAR contemplated how a radical feminist structure would continue to work within their organization, feminists nationwide debated the role of sexuality within politics. According to Ruth Rosen, the “sex wars” divided two generations of activists, one side arguing that heterosexual relationships could be violent and urged women to be cautious of male dominated beliefs on sexuality. While the other “pro-sex” side, told women to explore their sexuality in whatever form they desired. Veteran activists tended to side with the first camp while women new to the feminist movement often took a sex radical approach.<sup>132</sup> Rosen claims pornography polarized the generational division of the “sex wars.” However, pornography did not create a divide within WAR, instead the members of the 1980s continued to embrace the radical feminist theory that “pornography is the theory, and rape the practice.”<sup>133</sup> Despite their unity over the role of pornography in rape culture, WAR experienced a generational rift over the visible sexuality of

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<sup>130</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 335

<sup>131</sup> Bevacqua, Maria. *Rape on the Public Agenda*. 6

<sup>132</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 219

<sup>133</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 205-206; Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 191

members in the 1980s as young activists displayed the fashion of “sex radicals.”<sup>134</sup> Members of WAR in the 1970s wore clothing that shunned traditional notions of femininity such as blue jeans and work shirts. By the 1980s, WAR activists adopted fashions that had been popularized by lesbian “sex radicals” who sought overtly sexual fashions in order to reclaim some forms of traditional femininity. Whittier states young WAR activists found the politically correct clothing worn by an earlier generation as “narrow and boring.”<sup>135</sup> Activists present during the 1970s found these WAR members to be drastically different than themselves as one noted, “I noticed they’re all really young... and they all have Mohawk haircuts.”<sup>136</sup> The generational gap widened as individual fashion choices of activists mirrored the shifting lives of feminists in the 1980s.

The growing importance of sexual politics to WAR’s activism was evident in their political strategies as well. Rather than appeasing mainstream members of the movement in order to up their membership, as Betty Friedan had urged, the Women’s Action Collective debated emphasizing the importance of lesbianism. Nancy Whittier argues in her history of feminist activism in Columbus, *Feminist Generations*, that the entire Women’s Action Collective, including WAR, was largely sustained in the early 1980s by the predominance of lesbian women. Whittier notes that “lesbians were less able to assimilate outside the women’s movement and so maintained feminist commitment even in a hostile period.”<sup>137</sup> The significant role lesbian women played in sustaining the movement gave them a position of power. Ruth Rosen notes this was indicative of a national trend, “lesbian feminists also contributed a disproportionate amount of dedication and energy to the movement. They were the women who worked in the trenches... lesbians sustained shelters for battered women, rape crisis hotlines.” Rosen continues, “During

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<sup>134</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 218-219

<sup>135</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 218-219

<sup>136</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 219

<sup>137</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 72



the 1980s, the role of lesbians became even more important.”<sup>138</sup> WAR echoed this national trend.

Many activists agreed that sexuality did not create major divisions in WAR in the 1970s, even as lesbian women became more prominent in the organization. The importance of female community formed space within WAR that welcomed both lesbian and heterosexual women.<sup>139</sup> So while lesbianism was celebrated in the 1970s, members of WAR recalled efforts to not define themselves as separatists and welcome heterosexual women as equal feminists.<sup>140</sup> However, lesbians’ work to sustain the women’s movement in Columbus in the 1980s gave them a position of power within WAR. Whittier describes the effects of growing lesbian membership within the Women’s Action Collective and their member groups, “[B]y the 1980s and 1990s, lesbians were increasingly unwilling to soft-pedal either their sexuality or their political demands.”<sup>141</sup> In 1981, WAC debated emphasizing the importance of lesbianism to their collective in their Statement of Purpose by declaring, “WAC believes that lesbianism is the lifestyle most consistent with radical feminist theory.”<sup>142</sup> The debate became heated as some members worried about alienating heterosexual women from the movement. WAC was almost exclusively lesbian women at this point, but they continued to try and recruit heterosexual women.<sup>143</sup> The boldness of the proposed change to WAC’s statement of purpose exhibits a new generation of activists’ desire to create a collective that reflected their form of feminism.

As debates about the centrality of lesbianism to radical feminist organizations continued, lesbian women in WAR began to feel homophobic pushbacks from heterosexual members of

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<sup>138</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 271

<sup>139</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 108

<sup>140</sup> Bat Ami Bar On “Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio,” oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>141</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 108

<sup>142</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 72

<sup>143</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 72

WAR. One member in the early 1980s recalled that homophobia was creating a division among activists, “[T]here were some pretty major divisions as far as sexual orientation and sexuality. There were some heterosexual women involved in the group, some of whom were fabulous allies to the lesbians in the group and some of whom were really dealing with the National Organization for Women, you know, ‘lavender menace’ kind of philosophy, so you know, you had this undercurrent of homophobia on some people’s parts. And of course, it was never openly voiced because that would have been frowned upon, but it was palpable. You could really feel it in the comments and in the tones at some of the meetings.”<sup>144</sup> It is evident that some of Friedan’s conception of sexual politics did impact WAR’s radical feminism, and yet it was in reaction to WAR’s expanding radical politics. Another activist recalled, “I had discussions with some folks who were feeling an undercurrent, nothing that they could really identify. It could just be well-known that this small subgroup wasn’t really gonna socialize with this subgroup because of—just the gulf was too wide. ... I’m not sure that I would be able to say [that lesbian women were] discriminated against because I doubt that it was that overt. But feeling unwelcome can be a lot more covert and a lot more subtle.”<sup>145</sup> Homophobia may not have been openly voiced, but it created divisions between activists within WAR that impacted how women socialized and organized together. Unlike the first decade of WAR’s activism, the 1980s experienced increasing divisions that mirrored national debates over the role of sexual politics within feminism.

Some members were not just uncomfortable with intimacy between women; they questioned the legitimacy of programming that linked fighting homophobia and rape. A WAR activists recalled, “Straight women in WAR often felt that because rape is an issue affecting all women, and certainly not just lesbian women, they should not have had to dilute WAR’s

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<sup>144</sup> Allen, Ardith. *The Deradicalization of Columbus, Ohio’s Anti-rape Movement, 1972-2002*. 120

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. 121.

resources in order to fight issues of heterosexism and homophobia when they really wanted to concentrate solely on rape.”<sup>146</sup> This was a significant separation from WAR’s original approach to fighting rape. Founding members argued that women who transgressed heteropatriarchal gender roles were labeled “bad girls” and were therefore dismissed as legitimate rape victims, which made them vulnerable to sexual violence. WAR argued that as long as some women are vulnerable to rape, all women would be. This shift in some members of WAR’s approach to fighting the patriarchal system of rape while dismissing homophobia would have been counterintuitive to early activists in the movement. Even with the growing homophobia in WAR, members continued a feminist approach to ending rape that considered heteropatriarchy’s oppression of women. The push for radical feminist politics and the response by homophobic members were indicative of the continuing contradictions feminist activists met in the 1980s.

Divisions like the one in WAR over sexuality may have threatened to dilute some radical aspects to WAR’s feminist approach to fighting rape. However, Rosen argues that the alarming trend of growing divisions in the women’s movement was arguably a sign of feminism’s power. “Fragmentation, as troubling and confusing as it was, also made feminism accessible to new groups of women.” Rosen continues, “women in the heartland – groups previously considered beyond the reach of the women’s movement – were also busy reinventing feminism for themselves.”<sup>147</sup> By the mid 1980s, WAR’s role as a feminist organization had become more contentious. Activists who had formerly been present in WAR during its formation described the organization as being “less explicitly feminist” and more mainstream in the 1980s than it had been at its founding.<sup>148</sup> One former member recalled, “WAR has certainly continued, but it has become much more of a service organization than a radical feminist theory group or something

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<sup>146</sup> Allen, Ardith. *The Deradicalization of Columbus, Ohio’s Anti-rape Movement, 1972-2002*. 118.

<sup>147</sup> Ruth Rosen. *The World Split Open*. 271

<sup>148</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 205

like that. I suppose they still mouth a lot of the principles, like a feminist perspective on rape. But that's not really what they are about. I mean, they are the rape crisis center for the most part... I think it's a very different group now that it was."<sup>149</sup> Nancy Whittier claims in her history of radical feminism in Columbus, Ohio that the assessment of WAR in the 1980s as more mainstream was "debatable."<sup>150</sup> She notes that many of the mainstream criticisms made of WAR in the 1980s were present in the 1970s. WAR continued to link the system of rape to patriarchal society and insisted that all oppressions must end and society fundamentally change.<sup>151</sup>

It is arguable that some of WAR's most successful activism occurred in the 1980s. The same year WAR lost the North campus location for the rape crisis center and was forced to relocate further from the university community, WAR organized a massive protest on campus that garnered national attention in response to the horrific mass rape of a female student. A spatial analysis of these two events exemplifies the evolution of WAR's activism. First, they lost the central location of the rape crisis center and became isolated from a feminist community. And yet that same year, WAR reclaimed space for women on campus. The center was a radical feminist space for women, but WAR's protests in response to the rape of a female student garnered support from the larger community of women on campus, whether they were feminists or not. In this way, WAR became both more and less visible on campus in the same year.

In February of 1983, a female student reported to the university that seven male students had raped her over four hours in two dorm rooms in Steeb Hall. Five of the seven students were athletes on Ohio State's football and basketball teams.<sup>152</sup> Mitch Livingston, the dean of Student Life, remarked to *The Lantern* on the rapes, "I want to emphasize that there have been

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<sup>149</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 206

<sup>150</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 205

<sup>151</sup> Whittier, Nancy. *Feminist Generations*. 205

<sup>152</sup> Mark Braykovich, Cindy Dill and Lorl Murphy. "University Police Continue Investigation OSU Athletes May be Involved with Alleged Gang Rape." *The Lantern* (Columbus), February 28, 1983

allegations that have not yet been substantiated.”<sup>153</sup> Like in the Cold War Era, the university attempted to control the conversation surrounding the rape by emphasizing that the victim’s story was unsubstantiated, insinuating that it may not be true. A resident assistant in Steeb Hall anonymously reported to *The Lantern* that the university had forbidden them from discussing anything related to the case. The RA said, “it is not unusual for residence and dining halls officials to be secretive about issues such as a possible rape. ‘They don’t like to cooperate with the police,’ the RA said. Dormitories often try to cover up incidents like rape and solve them without the police, the RA said.”<sup>154</sup> The university actively silenced students who lived on the floor where the assault occurred and tried to “cover up” assaults in order to hide them from the police. However, the act of covering up a rape means that the university recognized a crime had occurred and actively attempted to hide it. The cover up marks a change in the university’s conception of rape compared to their ideologies in the post war era that assured students that rape did not happen on campus and was not perpetrated by male students.

One resident who lived on the floor where the rape occurred said he witnessed an OSU football player push a woman out of the dorm room in Steeb Hall around three o’clock in the morning and commented to *The Lantern*, “There’s been a lot of stuff go on around here; it’s just nobody’s ever called it rape before.”<sup>155</sup> This statement echoes those made by scholars who analyze acquaintance and date rape. *Ms.* magazine led a national research project on acquaintance rape titled *I Never Called It Rape*. The study found that women had conceptualized their rapes as “normal” because they had not fit into the narrow legal definitions of rape that most often punished violent forcible rape by strangers. This students’ disturbing recollection of

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<sup>153</sup> Mark Braykovich, Cindy Dill and Lorl Murphy. “University Police Continue Investigation OSU Athletes May be Involved with Alleged Gang Rape.” *The Lantern* (Columbus), February 28, 1983

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

the event emphasizes the normalcy of rape on Ohio State's campus. This student's statement that no one had "ever called it rape before," shows that violence against women was happening on campus, but women were not coming forward to report these assaults. This survivor's act of reporting male students challenged narrow on campus.

While previous instances of rape or violence against women had gone unreported, as this student implies, activists in WAR refused to allow it to happen again. Members of WAR believed the university was stalling its investigation until after the basketball season was over when OSU's roster would not be affected by the allegations made against several of the team's players.<sup>156</sup> After the university had denied information regarding the rape for nearly a month, WAR organized protests outside Ohio State's basketball arena that lasted several days.<sup>157</sup> At the time of the protests, Ohio State's arena was hosting the NCAA basketball tournament known as March Madness. WAR's protests were broadcasted by the national media along with their signs reading, "OSU what are you hiding?"<sup>158</sup> WAR passed out pamphlets at the protests demanding the university take action against the accused rapists regardless of their status at the university as well as establish an education program to prevent rape.<sup>159</sup>

WAR's signs held by activists at the demonstration perhaps best exemplify their long-standing commitment to redefine rape. WAR's early activism focused on changing the university's perception of rape as a crime committed by outsiders into an understanding that male students committed rape. Their signs at the demonstration read "athletes not above the

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<sup>156</sup> Gaborclk, Michael. "Group Protests OSU's Tactics; Says Rape Inquiry Mishandled" *The Lantern* (Columbus) March 4, 1983

<sup>157</sup> "Rape Inquiry Protested," *The Lantern* (Columbus) March 7, 1983, Gaborclk, Michael. "Group Protests OSU's Tactics; Says Rape Inquiry Mishandled" *The Lantern* (Columbus) March 4, 1983

<sup>158</sup> Gaborclk, Michael. "Group Protests OSU's Tactics; Says Rape Inquiry Mishandled" *The Lantern* (Columbus) March 4, 1983; Jodi Gold and Susan Vallari "Just Sex: Students Rewrite the Rules on Sex, Violence and Equality," 614.

<sup>159</sup> Gaborclk, Michael. "Group Protests OSU's Tactics; Says Rape Inquiry Mishandled" *The Lantern* (Columbus) March 4, 1983

law,” in order to highlight the fact that the university allowed male students to get away with rape by not punishing them. Another sign held by activists read, “women fair game at OSU.” This sentiment mirrors the one made by WAR in the 1970s in their publication *Freeing Our Lives*, which states, “Those of us who challenge the expected behavior pattern for women under patriarchy may even be considered ‘fair game.’”<sup>160</sup> The use of the same phrase a decade later by WAR activists exemplifies their commitment to the early ideologies of WAR.

The national attention WAR brought to Ohio State forced the university to respond swiftly. After WAR’s fourth protest in a week, President Jennings met with members of WAR and faculty members in the Department of Women’s Studies to develop a rape prevention program that would be funded by the university. WAR submitted a proposal for how the program should be run and insisted that it not merely perform services for women after they had been assaulted, but should have a feminist agenda that educates the university community on the patriarchal system that maintains rape.<sup>161</sup> The university reported that the program, which would eventually become the Rape Education and Prevention Program (REPP), would focus on “educating people about healthy relationships” between men and women.<sup>162</sup>

President Jennings also responded to WAR’s claims that the university had stalled their investigation on purpose, “Whenever there is the potential for criminal activity, the information is immediately turned over to the prosecutor's office. And in complex cases, it frequently takes a long time.”<sup>163</sup> The grand jury called by the Franklin County prosecutor failed to indict any of the athletes accused in the mass rape. The university issued a press release shortly after expressing

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<sup>160</sup> Women Against Rape, *Freeing Our Lives*. Box: 5, Folder: Rape Prevention Brochures and Pamphlets, Association of Women Students Subject File, The Ohio State University Archives

<sup>161</sup> Schimpf, Paula. “Jennings OKs Rape Education Project for Spring” *The Lantern* (Columbus) March 11, 1983.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

its “relief” that “no criminal activity occurred on our campus.”<sup>164</sup> Ohio State’s investigation resulted in three of the students being found guilty for violating the student code. They each appealed their cases to the Dean of Student Life, Mitchel Livingston, who had previously referred to the rape victim’s statement as unsubstantiated, and he suspended all sentences. *The Lantern* critically noted that Livingston’s decision was made “perhaps coincidentally, one week before the fall roster of the football players was to be announced.”<sup>165</sup> The male students were free to continue their behavior as before. The female student left the university.<sup>166</sup> WAR forced the university to create the Rape Education and Prevention Project, but it was a program that resulted from injustice. While the university created programming that acknowledged rape on campus and the reality that male students committed acts of violence against women, they did not create feminist space on campus as the Toni Goman Rape Crisis Center had done. The definition of rape had expanded on campus, but women were still isolated without a physical space.

The Rape Education and Prevention Project did not end sexual violence on campus. Even a program with a feminist agenda could not reverse the university’s conception of women as objects rather than academics. Debrah Ballam who was a lesbian feminist activist at Ohio State in the early 1970s, was later hired in the College of Business in 1985 where her male coworkers sent female professors pornography. Ballam also recalled an instance where one male professor shouted to a female professor, “you’ve got the best tits in the college,” in front of her classroom of students. The rape prevention program that relied on a feminist agenda was undermined by the sexism still present within the university. Ohio State sent conflicting messages about the worth of their female students by creating rape prevention programming alongside institutional sexism.

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<sup>164</sup> “Truth Buried During Steeb Hall Investigation” *The Lantern* (Columbus) October 5, 1983

<sup>165</sup> Ibid

<sup>166</sup> Ibid



By the late 1980s, social services that helped survivors of sexual violence began to close in response to limited funding opportunities. In 1988, Survivors of Crime could not continue to operate without state and federal grants. A spokesperson for WAR commented on the loss of the organization and their own difficulty to provide services for survivors as they were forced to place 50 women on a wait list for support groups till they could afford to hire another group facilitator.<sup>167</sup> Even with these limitations of WAR's activism, women kept rape prevention on the public agenda. When the Columbus Dispatch asked the Columbus Police how they prevent rape, Officer Bill Taylor answered, "There is no one magical answer... The best thing to do might be - and I hate to use this word - to submit. There is a lot of help for rape victims now, and there are worse things than being raped - like being seriously hurt or killed."<sup>168</sup> This officer's trivialized rape, lied to women about the reality of services available to them and propagated the notion that the best solution to rape was to submit, when WAR had been declaring for nearly two decades that women 85% of women who fight their rapists get away.<sup>169</sup> Each of WAR's efforts to end rape were met with political and cultural backlash. By 1995, shortly after the intruder had raped a member of WAR within the rape crisis center, WAR ended its last service to survivors, the 24-hour hotline.<sup>170</sup> A spokeswoman for WAR told the *Columbus Dispatch* that WAR had been unable to find funding or support within the community. She believed that organization had failed to gain support in part because of their name, "You sound pretty aggressive, violent. I think it's a bit of an offbeat name."<sup>171</sup> The militaristic name was a relic of their radical feminist

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<sup>167</sup> Brown, T.C. "Survivors of Rape, Where Will They Turn?" *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus) September 28, 1988

<sup>168</sup> Smith, Starita "Rape Prevention No Magical Answer" *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus) May 6, 1987

<sup>169</sup> Simmonds, Beth Bohley, "OSU Program Aiming to Stop Rape" *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus) April 1, 1991.

<sup>170</sup> Hoover, Felix. "Beleaguered Women Against Rape Closes Hotline" *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus) December 29, 1995

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

activism.<sup>172</sup> The fact that WAR's name, which had not prevented them from gaining grants throughout the 1970s, was perceived as too radical in the 1980s is indicative of the increasingly hostile climate created by backlash against feminism.

The significance of WAR's last year of activism shouldn't be overlooked. Even as their programming had been cut, the rape crisis hotline continued. Police Sergeant Patrick Foley, who headed the division on sexual abuse, remarked that Columbus' statistics on rape reports in 1996 had been unusually low because "in part of 1996 there wasn't a rape crisis line so we weren't getting referrals."<sup>173</sup> Foley specifically names Women Against Rape and the closing of their crisis line for the explanation, he asserts that survivors weren't getting the support they needed to report and were therefore, not coming forward.

In the same decade that WAR closed, female students angered over the university's inaction to campus rape organized to demand Ohio State reform the Rape Education and Prevention Project (REPP). In 1992, students organized a sit-in at an administration building and demanded the university implement mandatory rape education programs for all students. The sit-in occurred days after a female student reported a date rape in her dorm room on campus, however, one protestor commented, "The sit-in is not about this woman who was raped, but all women on campus who are potential victims of rape."<sup>174</sup> A spokeswoman for the university responded to the *Columbus Dispatch*, "We have, and continue to, address the safety and rape prevention issue. (But) we are not talking to students concerning the specific incident. The circumstances don't warrant that... If we had a situation with a stranger going through the

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<sup>172</sup> Bat Ami Bar On "Troublemakers: Feminist Anti-Rape Activism in Columbus, Ohio," oral history conducted 2016 by Anna Richey, Ohio State University

<sup>173</sup> Medick, Erin Marie "Rape Cases Rose in '97" *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus) January 2, 1998

<sup>174</sup> Doulin, Tim. "Alleged Rape Spurs Call for Safety Program" *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus) October 30, 1992

building and the residents were at danger, we would be giving out public information.”<sup>175</sup> This university administrator’s comment on the threat of danger posed by strangers compared to the threat of date rape exemplifies how the university continued to control the subject of rape on campus. By responding to only certain acts of rape that were deemed “dangerous” compared to others, the university delegitimized victims of date rape. Less than a month later students took to the oval and protested university inaction yet again, this time they demanded that OSU implement a rape crisis center on campus.<sup>176</sup> This protest was not organized by WAR, but their feminist approach to ending rape that insisted women needed physical safe spaces in order to fight rape had become ingrained in feminist activism on campus.

A university police officer responded to the protests on campus by assuring students that only five cases of rape had been reported that year.<sup>177</sup> Two years after this statement was made, WAR received on average 80 calls a month to their crisis hotline.<sup>178</sup> There was a striking difference between the number of rapes reported to the university and the number of survivors who contacted WAR. Students at the protests pointed out that rape was happening on campus, women just weren’t reporting it and the university needed to change the way it approached rape in order to enact change.<sup>179</sup> The same university police officer, who assured students that only five rapes had occurred on campus, also reported that four of the five were “ruled unfounded.”<sup>180</sup> The university’s conception of rape, that it occurred rarely and was often unsubstantiated, created an atmosphere in which female students and university police had vastly different

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<sup>175</sup> Doulin, Tim. “Alleged Rape Spurs Call for Safety Program” *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus) October 30, 1992

<sup>176</sup> Cadwallader, Bruce. “Gee Asked to Back Anti-Rape Programs” *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus) November 3, 1992

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Hoover, Felix. “Beleaguered Women Against Rape Closes Hotline” *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus) December 29, 1995

<sup>179</sup> Cadwallader, Bruce. “Gee Asked to Back Anti-Rape Programs” *The Columbus Dispatch* (Columbus) November 3, 1992

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

understandings of the threat of rape on campus. Consequently, administrators who had the power to create safe spaces for women remained ignorant of the reality of rape and silenced female students' experience of survivorship.

Over a decade after WAR was no longer on campus, a new group of anti-rape activists reclaimed space for women in order to demonstrate against sexual violence at Ohio State. These activists, dubbed "graffiti vigilantes," began stenciling the words "someone was raped here" in locations across campus where sexual assaults were reported.<sup>181</sup> This activism was meant to highlight the magnitude of rape on campus and force the university community to reconcile that campus space, which is meant to be a home, is in reality a dangerous place for women. The activists reported that they strived to only mark locations where several assaults had occurred so as to not identify a survivor. Nonetheless, this form of activism was deeply jarring to women who were traumatized by the physical reminder of their assault. Columbus' *The Other Paper* reported on the activism, "The local debate exemplifies a larger, nationwide debate surrounding radical feminist organizations -who has the right to speak on behalf of the women/survivors in question?"<sup>182</sup> This activism resembled WAR's in that it marked physical space in order to bring awareness to violence against women, and yet it also alienated some survivors who found the physical markers disturbing.

Recall that WAR disbanded over the debate of one survivor's choice to not report her rape. Some believed she had a responsibility as an activist and member of WAR to report while others believed it was their feminist responsibility to support her choice as a survivor. During one of WAR's final meetings shortly after the rape, dubbed the "WAR wake," members gathered to discuss the structure of WAR as a feminist organization and how they should continue. It

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<sup>181</sup> Stein, Sady "Graffiti "Vigilantes" Create Art, Unease Among Assault Survivors" Jezebel. Accessed April 25, 2016 <http://jezebel.com/5226428/graffiti-vigilantes-create-art-unease-among-assault-survivors>

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

eventually ended with a large contingent of members deciding to leave.<sup>183</sup> This debate stemmed from the larger conversations in WAR over the role of feminism in their organization and how a new generation of activists should inherit the movement. WAR's understanding of what actions made one a radical feminist changed as new members entered the organization and attempted to redefine feminism for themselves. The contradictions of the era forced WAR to navigate a constantly shifting sphere of activism that witnessed some of WAR's most significant accomplishments as well as its disbandment. Radical feminist anti-rape activism did not end with WAR's disbandment. It continues on campus and debates that were argued then are still troubling activists like the graffiti vigilantes.

Internal division and homophobia, pressure to find funding during a hostile political climate and the alienation of rape survivors all plagued WAR's last two decades of activism. Each division stemmed from the same reoccurring debate throughout WAR's history. What role should radical politics have in feminist anti-rape activism? Each generation of activists had to redefine their activism based on their own experiences of patriarchal expression and determine how a radical feminist structure could enable their activism. WAR's programming failed to address the contradictory needs of all their activists and it divided into two factions, each unable to bridge the gap to the other. Radical feminist politics have been present on Ohio State's campus for over forty decades. Women Against Rape instigated change within the university community by changing the definition of rape from a legal code created to protect men accused of rape to a conception of sexual violence based on the experiences of female students. Historians have labeled activists in the decades following the era of women's liberation as the post feminist generation. While the activists of WAR in the 1980s and 1990s were tremendously

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<sup>183</sup> Allen, Ardith. *The Deradicalization of Columbus, Ohio's Anti-rape Movement, 1972-2002*. 45

different than those during its first decade, it remained a radical feminist organization till its disbandment in 1995.

### Conclusion:

Feminist activists redefined rape on Ohio State's campus by exposing the university's role in constructing patriarchal understandings of sexual violence. *In loco parentis*, meaning "in place of the parent," was a policy adopted by universities that assumed the role of guardianship over students in order to guide them toward responsible citizenship. These policies allowed campus space to mimic "the home" and falsely represent it as a safe space for women. In comparison, off campus neighborhoods were understood as male-dominated "public" space. The university actively reported incidents of rape that occurred off campus and consistently described accused rapists as outsiders to the campus community from surrounding urban neighborhoods. OSU also created conceptions of rape victims that often blamed women for the violence against them. Ohio State advised female students they could avoid rape by obeying curfew hours and not walking alone at night. The university's warnings claimed women were capable of avoiding rape by following university rules, this implied that women who were assaulted, were being careless with their safety and were in part to blame for their assaults.

Women Against Rape, a feminist run anti-rape organization, redefined rape by challenging these narrow conceptions of sexual violence. WAR redefined rape as a crime of power. They argued that rape is a political act used to maintain the status quo of patriarchy. Women who confronted this system of power by defying accepted behavior for their gender role, like women who walked alone at night in male dominated public spaces, were targets of rape. Therefore, WAR argued that rape was a tool used to punish women who asserted their power. WAR's redefinition of rape was necessary to expose the university's patriarchal ideologies on rape that blamed women and created a false dichotomy between "good" women who followed the rules and "bad" women who defied conventions by claiming space for women in hostile,

male dominated public. For activists in WAR, Ohio State was a patriarchal institution that created conceptions of rape victims as “bad” women that, in WAR’s terms, made them “fair game” and excused the violence against them.

WAR fought rape by reclaiming space for women through a rape crisis center, shelter houses and creating feminist community in Columbus. This liberated space offered women protection and allowed female student’s to share their experiences with sexual violence. WAR redefined rape based on the experiences of women and implemented strategies to create change in the university community. WAR organized neighborhoods to create networks of communication and created visible symbols like shelter houses in order to place the burden of rape prevention on communities and not individual women. WAR was able to redefine women’s relationship to public space by shifting conceptions of rape.

In 1983, WAR lost their North campus location for the Toni Goman Rape Crisis Center due to funding cuts ushered in by conservative policies of the 1980s. The loss of this location demoralized members of WAR. And yet, the same year WAR became isolated from the campus community, they organized demonstrations that forced the university to create programming to fight rape, which acknowledged that sexual violence occurred on campus and was perpetrated by male students. Backlashes to feminist gains, like the funding cuts that forced WAR to give up the campus rape crisis center location, occurred concurrently with some of WAR’s most significant activism by forcing the university to create programming to fight rape. A pattern of contradictions is woven throughout WAR’s activism in the decades following their founding. All of the contradictions of this era stem from the same debate among members of WAR, how do we define feminism for ourselves? The new generation of WAR activists who inherited the movement questioned what role radical politics should have in anti-rape activism.



This history of student led anti-rape activism illuminates the reality of rape on Ohio State's campus through the testimonies of activists and survivors. Women Against Rape liberated space for female students which created conversations about sexual violence that were previously inconceivable. Historical analysis of feminist anti-rape activism on campus reveals a constant struggle to define rape on women's terms. By analyzing their history, we can better understand how to unpack the definition of rape that has previously been shaped by racist and patriarchal institutions, like universities.